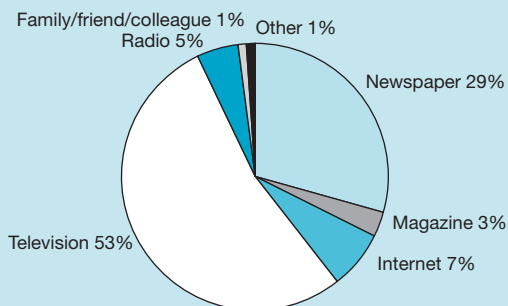
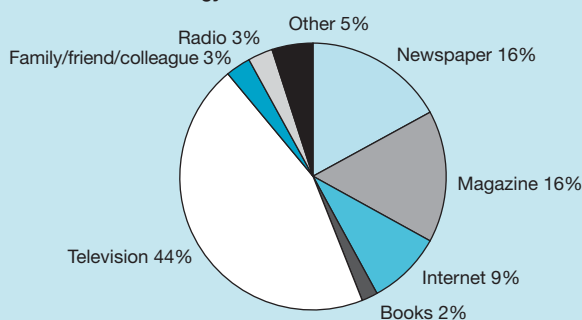


Figure 7-19.
Leading source of information: 2001

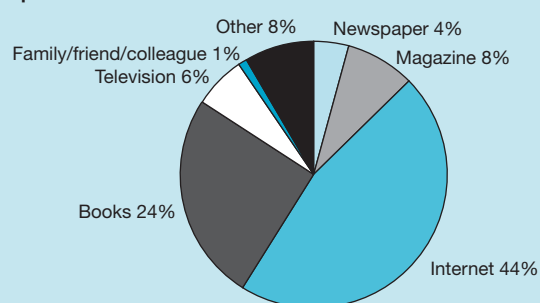
Current news events



Science and technology



Specific scientific issue



NOTE: Percentages may not sum to 100 because "Don't know" responses are not shown.

See appendix tables 7-42, 7-43, and 7-44.

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programs and documentaries on PBS and the Discovery Channel are highly regarded, their audiences are relatively small. (See appendix table 7-46.) Other types of programming such as evening and morning news broadcasts and news magazines like *60 Minutes*, *20/20*, and *Dateline* reach far more people. Therefore, most television viewers are exposed to information about S&T from news shows and news magazines that occasionally cover these subjects.⁴³

⁴³Science also shows up in entertainment programming, for example, children conducting science experiments on *Late Night with David Letterman*, or in an occasional storyline in a long-running show like *Friends* in which one of the characters is a research scientist. Also, each episode of *The West Wing* usually contains a science-related storyline. Because shows like these draw such large audiences, their conveying of information about science and science policy should not be discounted. They provide information and shape

In response to the 2001 NSF survey, 90 percent of adults said they watched television news reports or news shows every day (63 percent) or a few times a week (27 percent).⁴⁴ (See appendix table 7-47.) In addition, 31 percent said that they watched television news magazines like *60 Minutes*, *20/20*, or *Dateline* regularly or most of the time, and 52 percent said that they watched those shows occasionally.⁴⁵ (See appendix table 7-46.) These television news magazines can be a leading source of news about science for the public, including members of Congress; for example, a *60 Minutes* segment on cloning humans was shown at the beginning of a March 28, 2001, hearing held by the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

According to the 2001 NSF survey, 8 percent of Americans watch *NOVA* regularly or most of the time, and 29 percent watch the series occasionally. Twenty-two percent said they regularly watched public television programs other than *NOVA*, and 49 percent said they occasionally watched such programs.⁴⁶ Not surprisingly, a positive relationship exists between watching *NOVA* (as well as other PBS programs) and level of formal education. For example, 15 percent of those who had a graduate or professional degree said they watched *NOVA* regularly, compared with 11 percent of those who had only a bachelor's degree, 7 percent of those who had only a high school degree, and 4 percent of those who had not graduated from high school. Those who had a bachelor's or higher degree were also more likely than others to watch other PBS programs. (See appendix table 7-46.) In response to a Pew Research Center survey, 37 percent said that they regularly watched documentaries on cable channels such as the History Channel or the Discovery Channel. More men (43 percent) than women (31 percent) said that they watched these shows.

attitudes. A recent example of the influence of television on public opinion illustrates this point. During the 2000 presidential campaign, it was hard not to notice that a lot of voters were getting political news from entertainment talk shows, not just those on Sunday morning or the cable news networks or *Nightline*. Almost all major candidates felt compelled to do the talk show circuit, to appear on the *Late Show with David Letterman*, the *Tonight Show*, or the *Oprah Winfrey Show*, because of the growing recognition that their appearances on such shows proved to be an effective way of reaching Americans who do not watch the news or read a newspaper (Pfau et al. 2001).

⁴⁴According to another survey (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2000b), the percentage of Americans who report watching a nightly network news program has been declining significantly for more than a decade, from 71 percent in 1987 to 65 percent in 1995, 59 percent in 1998, and 50 percent in 2000.

⁴⁵According to the Pew Research Center survey, the percentage of Americans who say they regularly watch news magazines such as *20/20* and *Dateline* dropped from 37 percent in 1998 to 31 percent in 2000. Audiences for the three network morning shows also decreased, but by a smaller amount, during the past two years.

⁴⁶According to the Pew Research Center survey, PBS viewership has remained stable.